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Ben Walker

*Minnesota State University - Mankato*, [benjamin.walker@mnsu.edu](mailto:benjamin.walker@mnsu.edu)

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## ***Connecting to Students: Self-disclosure as a Motivational Tool for Collegiate Forensic Coaches***

***Ben Walker***

*Graduate Student*

*benjamin.walker@mnsu.edu*

*Department of Communication Studies*

*Minnesota State University, Mankato*

*Mankato, MN*

### **ABSTRACT**

*Forensic coaches spend a large amount of time with their students and often struggle to find effective methods of motivation; however, studies have shown that teachers (Christophel, 1990) and athletic coaches (Turman, 2008) can use immediacy as a way to increase student/competitor motivation. This paper examines how forensic coaches can use a specific interpersonal tactic (self-disclosure) to potentially increase student motivation. The review of literature covers self-disclosure and the link between immediacy and motivation in both educational and competitive settings; next, Petronio's Communication Privacy Management theory is contextualized with forensic coaches; finally, suggestions are offered to forensic coaches who wish to effectively motivate students through self-disclosure.*

The concept of motivation in competitive activities is vital to understand so that competitors can achieve success. Motivation has been examined through a wide grouping of lenses. With organizational communication, motivation is often examined on how to motivate workers; rhetorical scholars examine how messages are communicated to motivate specific actions in the public sphere; instructional communication scholars study how teachers can motivate students; sports communication looks at how coaches can motivate competitors. Of those mentioned, athletes and coaches interact in a unique way, as competition is taken into consideration as a different factor from the other studies of motivation; how the coach and competitor interact can have a significant impact on the effectiveness of motivational techniques used by the coach. Research has noted the different variables that influence athlete perceptions of their coaches' leadership styles (Turman, 2001; Turman, 2003), including argumentativeness (Kassing & Infante, 1999), behavior modification methods (Parrott & Duggan, 1999), and instructional strategies (Heath, 1991). Competition and motivation go hand-in-hand; coaches must find ways to motivate their competitors in order to achieve the goals and success for which they aim.

Forensic coaches spend large amounts of time with the competitors on their team coaching their performances and simultaneously building interpersonal relationships. Forensic coaches may often wonder how to best connect interpersonally with their competitors in order to motivate them. When establishing interpersonal relationships with their competitors, coaches can use both verbal and nonverbal communication to enhance closeness, increasing what Mehrabin

(1969) called immediacy. Mehrabin explained that immediacy is behavior that increases the feeling of psychological closeness with another person.

For some coaches, creating close interpersonal connections is something that comes naturally because of instinct or because certain techniques have been passed down from previous successful encounters as a coach or as a competitor. Other coaches struggle with how to successfully motivate their competitors through interpersonal means, especially when trying to deal with issues of self-disclosure and privacy. Regardless of previous success or failure among coaches, an interpersonal approach to understanding motivation between coaches and competitors can significantly improve the relationship as well as the competitive success of the competitor.

Since coaches are always looking for more ways to successfully motivate their students, examining interpersonal relationships, particularly a coach's self-disclosure, makes sense. After all, self-disclosure is a form of immediacy, which acts as predictor of increased motivation in educational settings (Christophel, 1990). Also in a competitive setting, Dunn and Holt (2004) found team members have an increased potential for enhanced motivation after disclosing to each other. Due to the fact that forensics is viewed as both educational and competitive, analyzing motivation in forensics through self-disclosure as a form of immediacy is an ideal approach. This interpersonal approach to forensic research is certainly called for. Although potentially beneficial, cross over in forensics research and interpersonal communication is less popular than other approaches (Kerber & Cronn-Mills, 2005), although attempts have been made at examining interpersonal relationships in forensics (Friedley, 1992; Schnoor & Green, 1989). Since there is little to no forensic literature that relates to coach self-disclosure in coach/competitor interpersonal relationships, it is critical to conduct an analysis of how coach self-disclosure and privacy relates to competitor motivation. Due to the lack of theoretically based strategies to assist coaches in using self-disclosure in interpersonal relationships with their competitors, coaches should have a resource that helps outline theoretically based suggestions on how to motivate competitors through the interpersonal relationships that develop between student and coach. The goal of this analysis is to provide approaches to how coaches can use interpersonal self-disclosures to motivate their students to reach whatever they determine to be their end goal. This paper looks to first review literature in the related fields, examine trends in navigating self-disclosure, and offer self-disclosure applications for forensic coaches to use in their interpersonal relationships with students. Initially, literature involving self-disclosure in interpersonal relationships will be addressed, followed by a review of literature involving immediacy and motivation through the lenses of forensics as education and forensics as competition.

### **Self-disclosure and Privacy**

Similar to teachers, forensic coaches spend a large amount of time working with students, which can result in exchanging feelings and opinions with students. Brookfield (2006) argued

teacher self-disclosure makes them seem more real to students. Teachers can achieve this through self-disclosure of their personal identities to their students. However, studies show that teachers need to believe they have an interpersonal relationship with students before they grant access to their private lives (Hosek & Thompson, 2009). Teachers who want to connect to a student should work on their interpersonal relationship; relational development with students is imperative to be seen as more real to students (DeVito, 1986; Frymier & Houser, 2000; Graham, West, & Schaller, 1992). Viewing forensic coaches as educators with interpersonal relationships in which they self-disclose can help us explore how best to approach forensic competitor motivation.

When forensic coaches and competitors initially meet, there is not much disclosure, much like most relationships. Eventually, however, privacy often begins to break down and self-disclosure occurs more frequently. Roloff (1987) hypothesized that “as the degree of intimacy associated with a relationship increases, the extent to which individuals disclose their needs in response to their partner’s need assessment behavior increases” (p. 27); basically, as people get to know each other better they are more comfortable with disclosure. Roloff’s idea is what further encourages partners to openly disclose to each other so that the relationship grows. The levels of shared self-disclosure need to be understood between partners and implicitly agreed upon to build and maintain a healthy level of communication in the interpersonal relationship; otherwise, dissatisfaction in the relationship might occur which could ruin the relationship. Forensic coaches and students should be comfortable with the level of disclosure that happens between each other. Relationships that do not have a shared understanding of the level of accepted self-disclosure can end up dissolving.

Maintaining interpersonal relationships with students is important for a forensic coach that wishes to field a healthy, functioning team. As Floyd and Wasner (1994) noted, “commitment to an intimate relationship results directly from feeling satisfied and rewarded in the relationship and perceiving that desirable alternatives are not easily available” (p. 71). If forensic students do not feel their interpersonal needs are being met by the coach, they can often seek relationships elsewhere, which may result in the student leaving the team. Forensic coaches that want to have and maintain interpersonal relationships with students should consider the role of self-disclosure in their relationships.

Self-disclosure, however, can be tricky. As Hosek and Thompson (2009) found, disclosures for educators are often intended to help students understand a concept or to build closer interpersonal relationships with them. Coaches that wish to build close interpersonal relationships with students can self-disclose to help achieve a goal; any coach across the country can probably provide an example of a time where they shared something about themselves to a student to help that student either understand a concept or to bring them closer together interpersonally. Self-disclosure can be beneficial, but managing privacy boundaries can be difficult. Knowing when to stop disclosing is a vital skill for a forensic coach to have—without this skill, coaches may inadvertently share information that may not be appropriate for a relationship with a student. Similarly, a coach can have a student that discloses at an

uncomfortable level. Over-sharing can lead to discomfort in the relationship if the disclosure reciprocation is not the same from both parties, as mentioned earlier. Understanding how to negotiate and maintain coach/student privacy boundaries will increase the likelihood of the relationship flourishing, and thus increase motivational effectiveness.

Petronio (2002) addressed privacy boundaries with her communication privacy management (CPM) theory. CPM explores how individuals negotiate and manage openness and privacy in relationships, which is something directly tied to forensic coaches and their relationships with their students. CPM has five basic principles explaining how people regulate the disclosure or concealment of private information and manage privacy in their relationships (Petronio, 2002). Principle #1: private information is perceived to be owned by the individual; a person's thoughts are their own and no one else's. Principle #2: the sense of ownership creates a want to control the flow of private information to others; thus, a person can decide whether to share the thoughts to others or not. Principle #3: privacy rules govern sharing of information; we construct guidelines for when we do or do not share information about ourselves. Principle #4: once private information is shared there is an assumption that both parties will follow existing privacy rules. Principle #5: managing the disclosure of private thoughts can be turbulent. As Petronio (2007) noted, "turbulence characteristically occurs when there is a disruption in the coordination of privacy rules or when someone's privacy boundary is blatantly violated—for instance, when an identity is stolen. Boundary turbulence often results in mistrust, anger, suspicion, or uncertainty about sharing private information" (p. 219). CPM offers a framework to view self-disclosure though. Understanding the steps of self-disclosure can give forensic coaches a lens to view their interpersonal relationships with students in an attempt to motivate them.

Forensic coaches often juggle their relationship with their students, trying to help the student learn but also attempting to be competitive. Burnett, Brand, and Meister (2003) argued that forensics is merely about competition with education in the activity is a perpetuated fantasy that coaches use to soften the blow that not everyone can win. Hinck (2003) countered by arguing that competition and education hold a dialectical tension with each other and both can exist in the community. Most compellingly, Ehninger (1952) wrote while forensics does involve competition, it is a co-curricular activity that is grounded in communication studies curriculum. Essentially, forensic coaches should be considered in both the educational and competitive contexts.

### **Forensics as Education**

Forensic coaches deal with disclosure in coach/student interpersonal relationships, but it is not just a single interaction that coaches must worry about. Often, how a coach approaches interpersonal relationships is indicative of how the team culture is acted out. In the activity of competitive collegiate forensic speaking, team dynamics and structure can play a large role in the overall happiness of team members, and how coaches interact with the students is a significant contributor to the team dynamic. Forensic programs that develop and maintain positive team

cultures generally have team members for longer and members who are happier (Miller, 2005; Worthen, 1995). As Mankowski and Thomas (2000) and Johnson and Watson (2004) pointed out, students who can find a connection with a group tend to have higher retention rates in that group because of their ability to feel a part of the culture. The motivation of the competitor is then driven by the pull to remain a successful part of the team culture. Following this line of thinking, the assumption that some forensic coaches have is that there is a positive correlation between level of motivation and the closeness of the interpersonal relationship between coach and competitor.

Bennetts (2002) found intimacy to be viewed positively and acknowledged as important to the mentoring relationship. It makes sense to conclude then, that many competitors who are actively engaged in the activity enjoy having close interpersonal relationships with their coaches. Friedley & Manchester (2005) noted that healthy team cultures need mutual respect to succeed; interpersonal relationships between forensic coaches and competitors are no different. Mutual respect and a sense of closeness in an interpersonal relationship are speculated to contribute to the effectiveness of motivational overtures.

As mentioned before, forensic coaches address both educational and competitive goals in a coach/student relationship. As an educator, coaches should embrace interpersonal means that bring a sense of immediacy to the relationship. Students benefit from a positive relationship with their instructor (Frymier, 2007) and can be motivated by simple *immediate behaviors* (displays of immediacy) such as public recognition (Elmer, 2004). While forensic coaches act as educators (Hinck, 2003), inside that role is often the role of mentor (White, 2005). Bennetts (2002) defined mentoring relationships, such as one involving a forensic coach/student, as "intimate learning alliances that happen naturally" (p. 155). This seems to reflect how many collegiate forensic coaches and students build interpersonal relationships; the relationships develop out of circumstance, but the depth of the relationship is developed with a more organic process. Regardless, coaches attempt to help their competitors any way possible. As White (2005) pointed out, "the coach as mentor seeks to guide the student to success in all aspects of life" (p. 89). Again, a level of immediacy is shared between the coach and student, which acts as predictor of increased motivation in educational settings (Christophel, 1990).

Instructional communication continues to add to the argument for close interpersonal relationships with students to boost motivation by suggesting educator self-disclosure can lead to an increase in non-mandatory time spent with the educator. For example, Fusani (1994) found teacher self-disclosure attempts (high verbal immediacy behaviors) to be a strong predictor for extra class communication (ECC), which is when students interact with their teacher outside of the classroom setting. For forensic students, interacting with their coaches outside of standard coaching appointments is often the norm. Nadler and Nadler (2000) noted, however, that ECC is not a regular occurrence for undergraduate college students. By seeking out communication with teachers, students demonstrate motivation to become better students. If a forensic student spends non-coaching time with a coach, it can demonstrate that the student enjoys the coach and has a close interpersonal relationship, thus potentially increasing the student's motivation. The greater

immediate behavior would seem to indicate more extra class communication initiated by the student, which is an indicator of student motivation to be a better student. Essentially, forensic students that spend more time with their coaches would seem to have a greater chance to be motivated due to the immediacy demonstrated by their coach in that interpersonal relationship. This is another example where immediate behaviors in an educational setting are linked to motivation.

Instructional communication studies show that by creating a positive rapport and classroom atmosphere with students, teachers can boost student motivation for educational purposes (Christophel, 1990; Frisby & Myers 2008; Meyer, 2009). These studies suggest that there is a positive correlation between teacher immediacy and student motivation. By understanding the interpersonal relationship they have with their competitors, coaches can assist in the motivational effectiveness of their interpersonal relationship. Additionally, Downs, Javaldi, & Nussbaum (1988) noted self-disclosure can be viewed as a form of immediacy, making self-disclosure a potentially valuable motivational tool in the educational process. However, the forensic coach/competitor relationship often goes deeper than merely an instructional setting (Hinck, 2003), which is why when examining the impact of showing immediate behaviors and sharing private information, competitive coaching studies need to be examined.

### **Forensics as Competition**

Coaches of all types stand to influence competitors considerably by filling a leadership position that encapsulates both support and instruction (Smith & Smoll, 1990; Turman, 2001; Turman & Schrod, 2004; Zhang & Jenson, 1997). Coaching can involve educational approaches, but the main focus of coaching is competitive success. The dialectical tension between education and competition in forensics is evident, so the focus shifts from education to competition.

Examining immediacy starting at the team level, Turman (2008) found that a coach's verbal immediacy is a "significant predictor for athlete satisfaction, task and social attraction to the group, and social group integration" (p. 173). In the study, Turman concluded that coaches' attempts to build team cohesion are further enhanced when coaches talk with athletes about issues beyond the sport and discuss these non-sport related things with them before and after practices or games, demonstrating that immediacy is a part of competition as well as education. Further, Turman and Schrod (2004) concluded that athletes have higher affective learning when coaches are open to suggestions. More importantly, supportive feedback from coaches can lead to greater team cohesion and intrinsic motivation (Horn, 1985; Horn, 2002; Smith, Fry, Ethington, & Li, 2005) and self-disclosure increases motivation on teams (Dunn & Holt, 2004). As Turman (2008) argued, immediate verbal interaction between the coach and athlete may lead to higher levels of athlete satisfaction and cohesion, and potentially increasing motivation. The

literature seems to suggest coaches can increase motivation on competitive teams through immediacy.

Verbal immediacy may be more effective in motivating competitors than nonverbal immediacy. Even though nonverbal immediacy behaviors have been shown to motivate students (Christensen & Menzel, 1998), Turman (2008) found that nonverbal immediacy techniques, while effective in educational settings, may not be as effective for coaches who wish to build cohesion with competitors. Turman's findings are not surprising as many studies confirm positive verbal behavior as increasing motivation among athletes. For example, coaches using messages that are positively reinforcing and encouraging can lead to higher self-esteem among their players (Smoll, Smith, Barnett, & Everett, 1993). Behavior alteration techniques are commonly used among coaches as well, with many effective results. Martin, Rocca, Cayanus, and Weber (2009) found that athletes reported when coaches encouraged them with immediate reward from behavior (e.g. "you will find it rewarding") and encouraged them with self-esteem reminders (e.g. "you feel better about yourself if you work hard"), the athletes felt greatly motivated.

Immediate behavior in forensic coaches is seen nonverbally and verbally as they look to build interpersonal relationships with their competitors to increase their motivational prowess. Viewing coaches as mentors, White (2005) argued, "The friendship approach to mentoring views mentor and mentee as peers who are equals. There is no hierarchical distance between the involved parties. Mentor and mentee view each other as close friends without the presence of any professional distance" (p. 90). White claimed one of the main advantages of this approach to be that intense trust is established through high levels of intimacy. Many forensic coaches perform their tasks with this mentality; as Friedley (1992) argued about the coach/competitor dynamic, "the very nature of the dyadic relationship, a joint effort focused toward creating a product, lends itself to reciprocity" (p. 54), with coaches and competitors disclosing more private information as the relationship deepens. For forensic coaches, successfully managing self-disclosure and privacy in their interpersonal relationships with competitors may lead to greater motivational gains.

For instance, the close interpersonal relationships that can develop on a competitive team are highly encouraged by scholars, with Yukelson (1997) advocating that all teams should actively promote mutual understanding team building programs to increase the feeling of togetherness. Dunn and Holt (2004) found that self-disclosure can act as a positive enhancement of interpersonal connection between team members, bringing them closer together—2/3 of the participants in the study reported increased motivation to work harder for the team after a disclosing session. Forensic coaches can use exchanged self-disclosure as a way to motivate their students.



## Trends

Forensic coaches can focus on education and/or competition, but motivation can be generated either way by displaying immediate behaviors. Nonverbally immediate behaviors include making oneself physically available to chat, gestures or touching that demonstrate positive feelings toward the other person, as well as instances that involve time use or proximity. Verbally immediate behaviors include talking about feelings, sharing words of encouragement, or even providing clear instructions. A teacher might attempt immediate behavior by encouraging students to come in during office hours to discuss or work on something, thus showing effort on the teacher's part to be closer to the student with outside of class attempts at immediacy. A teacher could also work to develop immediacy with his/her students by giving instructions for an assignment that are clear and concise. A sports coach might engage in the physical nature of practice, perhaps joining the competitors during drills or simply words of encouragement during practices and games to bring a psychological closeness with the competitors.

Self-disclosure also fits into the verbal immediacy category as the use of self-disclosure and narratives has been shown to increase immediacy (Downs, Javaladi, & Nussbaum, 1988). However, self-disclosure itself does not promise immediacy in the relationship. At first glance, it may appear that being immediate is an easy task. However, we need to dispel the assumption that any attempt at immediacy, including self-disclosure, is inherently immediate. While immediate behaviors increase the psychological closeness with another person, self-disclosure may not automatically do this. As outlined with CPM, Petronio (2002) argued that disclosure can lead to turbulence which may or may not be resolved. Essentially, we must call into question the assumption of immediate competence with self-disclosure or, in other words, the belief that all coaches that self-disclose successfully achieve a closer interpersonal relationship with their students. Motivational success, or even gained immediacy, is not guaranteed if a person self-discloses. When attempting to build immediacy, forensic coaches should keep in mind the complication of navigating self-disclosure. To understand the boundaries of self-disclosure, we need to practically explain the theoretical connection between forensic coaches and CPM.

### Navigating self-disclosure

It is important to note that this is not a remote phenomenon: educators in our society do use self-disclosure as a means to connect to students (Zhang, Shi, & Hao, 2009) and many make it a goal to have informal relationships with their students (Lee Grove, 1984). Self-disclosure is also used to motivate in a competitive setting (Dunn and Holt, 2004). When forensic coaches self-disclose, they need to be aware of how best to handle the situation; communication privacy management theory offers a framework.

To make sure self-disclosure is effective as a motivational tool, forensic coaches need to be conscious of immediacy when self-disclosing. Essentially, forensic coaches should be aware

of how the disclosure process works to make sure turbulence in the process does not occur, and if it does, how to best handle it. Petronio (2002) offers CPM as a lens to view self-disclosure, and forensic coaches should consider Petronio's theory when attempting to motivate through self-disclosure.

Petronio's first principle in CPM argues that a person's thoughts are their own and no one else's. Before forensic coaches self-disclose to students, coaches need to be aware that the student may not be thinking the same thing; whether that is the topic or the appropriateness of the situation, a self-discloser cannot assume that the other person is fully aware of the intention of the disclosure, nor can they assume the other person is comfortable with the topic breached in the disclosure. Essentially, a self-disclosing coach needs to be sure a student is on the same page as them. Disclosing personal feelings about a specific subject when the other person is not thinking about or aware of the subject can lead to ineffective self-disclosure as immediate behavior, thus losing its motivational effectiveness.

Petronio's second principle states a person wants to control if or when they get to disclose their thoughts. Once a thought is determined to be potentially unique, a coach must choose if/when they want to share the thought. If a student is thinking similar thoughts, perhaps an analogous disclosure from a coach might be appropriate. However, if the coach does not want to share, nothing will happen. Due to the power structure of a forensic team, where the student is the subordinate, a coach may feel as if they have less to worry about by self-disclosing. Despite the hierarchal structure of teams, many coaches wish to share information about themselves on their own timeline. If something is extremely personal to a coach, he/she might not want to share it initially in the relationship. Controlling if and when to disclose personal thoughts can be precarious and if done improperly can lead to turbulence and maybe even a termination of the relationship.

The student needs to be ready to hear the disclosure from the coach. Trust must be established between the two people; otherwise, the disclosure might be too much for the relationship to handle. Not only must the coach trust the student when self-disclosing, but the student must trust the coach enough to hear what the coach has to say and not only not take offense to the disclosure but be brought psychologically closer to the coach.

Petronio's third principle states there are rules that govern self-disclosing. Forensic coaches and students understand there are rules that guide how interactions are supposed to take place; these rules are not carved in stone for every coach/student interpersonal relationship, but much like any interpersonal relationship (or solutions in a persuasive speech) the rules are constructed from three frames: institutional, societal, and personal.

*Institutional:* Rules and norms govern how people interact and disclose. For a forensic coach who deals with undergraduate students, there is a specific code of conduct that he/she must adhere to. Where a person works highly influences their interpersonal relationships. Many higher education institutions have specific guidelines as to how to interact with undergraduate students, particularly if they are not legally adults. These rules are typically clearly laid out for coaches to

know and follow—students may not be aware of these rules, although the guidelines are often made publicly available.

*Societal:* Society has also laid out rules that shape how people interact with each other. Forensic coaches should be aware of the expectations that society has about their specific interpersonal relationship, particularly with what is appropriate to share in regards to their professional position and age difference to the student. What a graduate student in his/her twenties discloses with an undergraduate student can have different societal acceptance than what a faculty member might disclose to the same student.

*Personal:* Guidelines for disclosure are also defined by personal means. Each person has their own set of rules that govern how they disclose. Each person might also have different rules for different relationships. Likewise, each relationship must develop its own set of rules to govern self-disclosure. Much like the societal rules (and unlike the institutional rules), there is nothing written down for the personal guidelines, merely an implicit knowledge.

Petronio's fourth principle is that once information is shared there is an assumption that both parties will follow existing privacy rules. With self-disclosure there is an assumption that the coach and student know how to behave, but as previously mentioned most rules that govern how to behave during self-disclosure are not explicit. The implicit nature of self-disclosure rules makes it difficult for coaches and students to successfully navigate a self-disclosing scenario. When self-disclosing, a forensic coach and student must have an understanding of the rules involved, including how to react to the disclosure as well as how to deal with it afterwards. Problems arise when either of the members of the disclosure exchange does not follow the same set of understood privacy rules. A violation can occur through disregard for established rules or through ignorance of a differing set of rules between the two parties. As with Petronio's first principle, a self-disclosing party cannot assume that the other person is on the same page. To avoid turbulence, both parties must be in sync. Self-disclosing without generating much conflict is something that happens frequently, but there are times when privacy rules do not align within the interpersonal relationship—this leads into Petronio's communication privacy management final principle.

Petronio's fifth principle is that managing the disclosure of private thoughts can be turbulent. Turbulence can indeed occur, and managing it can be a struggle for some coaches and students. If there is some significant misunderstanding of the privacy rules, conflict can arise, which directly diverts from the goal of being motivational through immediate behaviors; if there is conflict between a coach and student, it is less likely that a coach will be able to successfully motivate the student.

### **Application**

When self-disclosing in an attempt to build immediacy to motivate, forensic coaches should keep immediate behaviors in mind. Due to the lack of widespread forensic pedagogical training, self-disclosure cannot be formally integrated into coaching philosophies. Hopefully,

however, coaches can spread the effectiveness of their self-disclosures through word of mouth. To motivate students, forensic coaches can self-disclose as an attempted form of immediate behavior, but should take heed of the following suggestions offered:

*1) Disclose on an escalating scale*

From the very first moment a new member approaches a coach to potentially join the forensic team the coach needs to be on his/her guard. Disclosing too much early in a relationship may jeopardize the integrity of the relationship. If the novice and the coach have no established relationship, the interpersonal privacy rules have had no time to solidify, which means the entirety of the disclosure would be judged by institutional and societal rules. While it is true that it is up to the coach to make the decision if the relationship is ready for a particular type of disclosure, novices rarely are familiar enough with the coach right away to understand the coach's personal privacy rules. Further, the forensic context (perhaps even the specific team) provides another layer of societal rules, where the team or activity acts as a subculture with its own set of expectations. By definition, the novice has little or no knowledge of the culture's norms and would be blinded in a second privacy rule category. Essentially, novices do not have enough information and experience to properly handle and sufficiently process high-end self-disclosures from forensic coaches. The disclosures would end up either pushing novices away or the novices (without a frame to work with) would not experience the full impact of the potential immediate connection and would be less inclined to be motivated by said disclosure. Coaches need to be aware that novices may not handle self-disclosure as well as coaches might assume.

Interpersonal relationships that have been around for a while may be ready for more intimate disclosures and may be more capable of handling a privacy expectation breach and weathering the turbulence. Veteran members of the forensic team/community are better equipped to experience the immediate behavior and be motivated from the disclosure because of their familiarity with the societal and personal privacy rule expectations. Additionally, because of their familiarity with the coach, veteran students might be willing to forgive and/or ride out interpersonal turbulence because of the history and investment in the relationship.

Coaches should feel free to share what they feel comfortable with, but remember that not all members will feel the same impact. Self-disclosing to the team in a large group setting can help students get more familiar with the coach's personal privacy rule expectations. When self-disclosing in a large team setting, the coach cannot possibly tailor the disclosure to each student, meaning the impact of the disclosure will potentially have less of an impact if certain members do not understand the assumed set privacy rules. In the group setting, a good way to help elevate the problem of varying perspectives on privacy rules is to explicitly state the intentions of the disclosure scenario. For example, before allowing each member on the team to say something at a pre-nationals retreat, the coach might lay some ground rules such as "what is said here, stays here," "one person talking at a time", and "respect what everyone has to say" as well as reminding students that this may get emotional. By framing the situation, the coach can

effectively set up all group members with the same disclosure rules and expectations, thus familiarizing students with the coach's personal privacy rule expectations and increasing motivational effectiveness.

## 2) *Stay consistent with disclosures*

The problem with privacy rules is that often they are implicit. Personal and societal rules are not written down, which makes it difficult to determine the rules for a newcomer to the forensic culture or the interpersonal relationship. Coaches need to stay consistent with their disclosures to make the privacy rules somewhat explicit. Self-disclosure should be performed in ways that are repeatable by the coach. For example, a coach may self-disclose frequently or infrequently. The frequently disclosing coach may do so during coaching appointments, eating lunch, on van rides, or during team meetings. The infrequent disclosing coach may only self-disclose during highly emotional moments such as team reflective periods or farewell addresses. By being consistent, a coach (regardless of how often they self-disclose) can increase the chance that students will know what to expect from them. Of course, if the level of self-disclosure is dissatisfying to the student, steps should be taken to find a middle ground where both members of the relationship feel comfortable with the disclosure. Once comfort is reached in the relationship, coaches should aim for consistency.

Not only does consistent self-disclosure clarify expectations, the expectations can then be passed on through team members. When novices join the team they learn about the team and the coaches through storytelling. Veteran members of the team can pass on stories about and advice on how to deal with the coaches. By maintaining consistency, a coach can not only clarify personal privacy rules for his/her current team, but also for team members in the future.

## 3) *Self-disclose with immediacy in mind*

Part of what makes self-disclosure sometimes ineffective is that the intent often is not interpersonally focused. The goal of self-disclosure should be to grow psychologically closer to the other person. While it is true that immediate behaviors can increase motivation, and if you are in need of motivational tools self-disclosure might be a good bet, we must recognize that interpersonal relationships benefiting from self-disclosure is a fine achievement in itself.

To successfully motivate with self-disclosure, immediacy must be kept at the forefront of the action. Many coaches (especially young coaches) enjoy telling "war stories" about their days of competing; these self-disclosures must serve the purpose of bringing the two people closer together. If the outcome of the story is merely for entertainment and not to increase immediacy, motivational gains are less likely to be achieved. Keeping in mind how the student benefits from self-disclosure is imperative if a coach wishes to motivate them. Demonstrating that the self-disclosure is a caring act by the coach, and not merely a vainglorious demonstration, is critical to maintain immediacy; as instructional communication studies have shown, perceived caring can

boost student motivation (Frisby & Myers, 2008; Meyer, 2009). To show caring with self-disclosing, coaches can do a number of things:

- Select disclosures that directly relate to the interpersonal relationship with the student.
- Maintain positive nonverbal immediacy while disclosing, such as eye contact, physical closeness, and smiling.
- Monitor verbal and nonverbal feedback to determine if the student is feeling turbulent.

By keeping the focus on immediate behaviors with the benefit of the student in mind, coaches can effectively use self-disclosure as a motivational tool.

### **Conclusion**

The potential benefits from increased immediacy between coach and competitors has been made apparent, with coaches, competitors, and the activity as a whole gaining another tool to increase the chances of reaching educational and competitive goals. Additionally, while this paper has addressed forensic activity as educational and competitive it has failed to mention another important element to why many students compete in, and why many coaches stay in, forensics: the friendships that develop with peers. Motivating students to work harder in the activity is a noble goal, but many students' and coaches' primary goal is to maintain positive interpersonal relationships in the forensic community. Self-disclosing can increase immediacy to help the quality of a team's interpersonal relationships, effectively making coaches and students better friends. Perhaps an increase in immediate behavior will lead to a more inclusive forensic culture that, at times, is criticized as being difficult to access for outsiders.

It is also important to recognize that this approach to motivation looks at the interpersonal relationship as a one-way street, with the coach motivating the student through personal actions. This approach does not recognize other variables might motivate the student and that the interpersonal relationship between the coach and student might influence the coach as well. Further examination of both motivational techniques and interpersonal relationships in forensics would be an excellent avenue for continuing to understand human communication and the activity of competitive forensic speaking.

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